

A Word from the Chairman

In 1946 Winston Churchill spoke of Europe as a continent facing a return of the Dark Ages with all its cruelty and squalor. Indeed, in the bleak years immediately after World War II, Europe was a patchwork quilt of nations struggling not only for self-determination but in some cases for their very existence. But that time is past—in large part because of the visionary leadership of an alliance which is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Western Europe is today becoming a tightly woven tapestry of independent states linked by common threads of liberty, prosperity, and the rule of law. The North Atlantic Treaty Organiza-

This is not an easy task, for the Alliance must provide for collective defense while adapting to out-of-area challenges. At the same time, NATO should engage former adversaries and build on its relationships with Russia and other members of the Partnership for Peace program as part of a comprehensive architecture for security. All this adds up to an exciting time for the Alliance.

Tomorrow's Challenge

During the Cold War NATO faced a clear threat from the East. The visionaries who crafted the Alliance—such as Charles de Gaulle, Harry Truman, George Marshall, Louis St. Laurent, Alcide de Gasperi, and Ernest Bevin—realized that the United States had to move beyond its historic isolationism and remain engaged in Europe. The founders believed that the future security of both sides of the Atlantic rested on a strong transatlantic commitment, convictions that continue to serve us well today. As NATO undergoes a transformation to meet the challenges of the next century, the allies must be mindful that their strength lies in a “one for all and all for one” approach based on common interests and goals.

The core and enduring mission remains collective defense. The principle of mutual security upon which NATO was founded must always guide the Alliance. In the past this meant defending the territorial integrity of its members. That view of collective defense has become insufficient to address more sophisticated dangers. Europe has clearly entered a new security era, and it is simply prudent to observe that NATO must broaden its strategic perspective to protect its member nations from the myriad of complex,

as NATO undergoes a transformation to meet the challenges of the next century, the core and enduring mission remains collective defense

tion is one of the foundations on which these accomplishments have been built. This is especially true because NATO has not simply been a military body; it has been extremely successful in political terms. Under its umbrella, Europe has experienced fifty years of peace in an era of danger.

Although the threat of the Cold War has largely faded into memory, the work of NATO is far from complete. The long shadow cast by the Iron Curtain prevented the flowering of economic growth and the budding of democracy in much of Eastern Europe. Now the Alliance must adapt and deal with the realities of the struggle to replace totalitarianism and centrally planned economies with democracy and market economies.

(continued on page 4)

1 A Word from the Chairman

by Henry H. Shelton

■ FORUM

7 Celebrating and Cerebrating the Success of the Alliance

8 NATO Chronicle: The Cold War Years

by Richard L. Kugler

NATO AT FIFTY



18 NATO Chronicle: New World Disorder

by Kori N. Schake

PHOTO CREDITS



The cover features F-16 over the Italian Alps (1st Combat Camera Squadron/John E. Lasky). The front inside cover shows (from top left) members of International Police Task Force together with soldiers of Task Force Eagle confiscating Serbian weapons in Bosnia (55th Signal Company/Jeff D'Aluisio); Americans and Greeks performing close formation drill (U.S. Navy/Renso Amariz); B-2 at RAF Fairford (2^d Communications Squadron/Jeff Fitch); and *USS Tucson* and Canadian frigate *HMCS Toronto* in Persian Gulf (Fleet Combat Camera Group, Pacific/Jeffery S. Viano). The table of contents catches Stabilization Force change of com-

mand (DOD/Todd Cichonowicz) and marines from *USS Bonhomme Richard* during Urban Warrior '99 (Fleet Imaging Command, Pacific/Eric Logsdon). The back inside cover features French aircraft carrier *Foch* during Franco-American fleet exercise (U.S. Navy/Shawn Eklund). The back cover depicts cannon being loaded during training in Bosnia (55th Signal Company, Combat Camera/R. Alan Mitchell); Fleet Battle Experiment Echo, San Francisco Bay (Fleet Imaging Command, Pacific/Don Peterson); marines undergoing advanced warfighting experiment (Fleet Imaging Command, Pacific/Michelle R. Hammond); and C-5 landing at Aviano air base (1st Combat Camera Squadron/John E. Lasky).

25 The Atlantic Alliance: A View from Capitol Hill

by William V. Roth, Jr., and Stanley R. Sloan

31 The Atlantic Alliance: A View from the Pentagon

by William S. Cohen

35 NATO: Prospects for the Next Fifty Years

by Javier Solana

41 Meeting Future Military Challenges to NATO

by Wesley K. Clark

47 Transforming NATO Defense Capabilities

by Harold W. Gehman, Jr.

52 European Security and Defense Identity: Berlin, St. Malo, and Beyond

by Alexander R. Vershbow

Special Operations Forces in Peacetime

by John M. Collins

Landpower and Future Strategy: Insights from the Army after Next

by Huba Wass de Czege and Antulio J. Echevarria II

Joint Fires Coordination: Service Competencies and Boundary Challenges

by Robert J. D'Amico

Operational Maneuver from the Sea

by Charles C. Krulak

Non-Lethal Weaponry: From Tactical to Strategic Applications

by Dennis B. Herbert

■ OUT OF JOINT

Making the Joint Journey

by William A. Owens

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commemorating the
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by Alan L. Brown

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Lyman Louis Lemnitzer

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■ A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

(continued from page 1)

asymmetric threats on the conflict spectrum. These include regional conflicts beyond the territory of the Alliance—out-of-area contingencies such as Bosnia and Kosovo—and others involving the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorism.

Indeed, the amorphous nature of the current security environment means that future threats will be more difficult to anticipate and counter. While not as menacing as those posed by the Warsaw Pact, these dangers are grave; and the allies must individually and collectively anticipate them and have the courage to deal with them.

Thus in commemorating past success, we must resist the temptation to rest on our laurels. The Alliance of tomorrow must not only defend its enlarged borders but, as President Clinton has stated, “defend against threats to our collective security from beyond those borders—the spread of weapons of mass destruction, ethnic violence, and regional conflict.”

Transforming NATO

The Washington Summit of 1999 affirms fifty years of success in safeguarding freedom. It recognizes the rise of new democracies across Europe and the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland as new members. But more important than commemorating past success, the summit provides the ideal venue to discuss and chart the transformation of the Alliance.

This transformation is not without controversy. Some critics speculate that America seeks to shift NATO into a global role, a claim that is unfounded. While Alliance security must consider the global context, NATO is unquestionably a Euro-Atlantic organization for Euro-Atlantic threats. Its proven track record has demonstrated the capability and credibility to provide the framework for enlarging the security envelope that protects Europe.

To meet the challenges ahead, NATO needs new tools. It should reflect a cooperative spirit and an ethos of adaptation and partnership to cope with the new security risks. In this regard, the United States is working closely with its allies to improve NATO flexibility through four major initiatives. Although the Alliance has not yet reached complete consensus on them, it is my hope that we will come to closure in the months ahead.

First, the allies agree that a new Strategic Concept must be developed. The United States believes that this concept must reaffirm the core mission of collective defense but should also put new emphasis on the unpredictable and multidirectional nature of threats such as regional conflict, WMD, and terrorism. In sum, the Strategic

Concept—the first revision since 1990—must reflect the evolving strategic environment.

Second, to complement the Strategic Concept, the Alliance must explore innovative ways to improve its ability to operate together and deal with a new array of threats. Toward this end, the Executive Working Group is forging a Defense Capabilities Initiative, an effort to adapt conventional forces for new missions. It is expected to produce a Common Operational Vision to spur on development of both self defense and the ability to respond quickly and effectively to crises, either within NATO territory or outside in areas of fundamental interest. This initiative will stress mobile, sustainable, survivable, and most importantly interoperable forces to engage effectively across the full range of missions. This vision should draw on national initiatives to develop and test forces for the future.

Third, NATO must be prepared to cope with a real threat to its people, territory, and forces from WMD and their means of delivery. This is

the United States fully supports efforts to strengthen European Security and Defense Identity

arguably the most significant Article 5 menace members face and one that must be addressed seriously and soon. More than just acknowledging these

weapons as a priority, NATO must turn rhetoric into action and create forces and instruments to combat this danger. The WMD Initiative is a step in the right direction. It should enormously improve Alliance efforts to halt the proliferation of WMD and to deter, prevent, and protect against such threats. This initiative will notably complement, not supplant, existing international regimes designed to control proliferation as well as national programs being pursued in this area.

Finally, the United States fully supports efforts to strengthen European defense capabilities through the European Security and Defense Identity. I trust that in the coming months the Alliance will complete the initiatives agreed upon in Berlin in 1996 on separable but not separate forces and NATO asset-sharing with the Western European Union. Such an identity within the framework of the Alliance will enhance the security of Europe and help NATO to meet tomorrow's challenges.

To the Future

NATO is at a fork in the road. At a similar juncture in America's past, Abraham Lincoln reminded his countrymen that they could not escape history and that succeeding generations

would remember them with honor or dishonor, depending on the path they chose. The central lesson of this century is that when Europe and North America act together, they advance their collective interests and values more effectively than they could separately. When they fail to do so, stalemate and crisis often result and the tapestry of liberty, prosperity, and the rule of law unravels.

The security architecture of the next century should therefore be shaped by the commitment of our leaders to act together, defend NATO borders, and prepare for threats which originate from beyond those borders. The Alliance must always recognize that international order and stability in many regions necessitate resolute and imaginative leadership. To provide that NATO must possess a clear strategic vision and common operating procedure to navigate the turbulence ahead.

Thus NATO must be prepared to deal with uncertainties. It must maintain its relevance by ensuring that it is ready for the next battle, and not the last. In many ways, the greatest risks lie in complacency and self-congratulation. We cannot afford either—on either side of the Atlantic.

Fifty years ago President Truman stated that if the Alliance “had existed in 1914 and 1939, supported by the nations who are represented here today . . . [it] would have prevented the acts of aggression which led to two world wars.” His words are a powerful testimony of the transatlantic commitment. They also warn of the dangers awaiting us should we doubt the continued relevance of NATO or the need to transform it to meet changing security dynamics.

NATO has a bright future, but only if it displays courage, imagination, and determination by remaining pertinent to the international security environment. Just as our forbearers grappled with the aftermath of World War II by developing a strategic framework to keep the peace, current leaders have an obligation to restructure the Alliance for the next century. Let us not shrink from this duty, but rather embrace it.

HENRY H. SHELTON
Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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